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THE LESSONS OF P.S. 192.

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P.S. 192 IN NEW YORK CITY'S HARLEM HAS DEMONSTRATED THAT NEGRO AND PUERTO RICAN STUDENTS CAN ACHIEVE IN A RACIALLY ISOLATED GHETTO ELEMENTARY SCHOOL UNDER THE LEADERSHIP OF A DEDICATED PRINCIPAL. SINCE 1962, WITH A CHANGE OF ADMINISTRATOR ALL FIRST- AND SECOND-GRADE PUPILS HAVE RECEIVED 45 MINUTES OF READING INSTRUCTION THREE OR FOUR TIMES A WEEK, AND THOSE CHILDREN IN GRADES THREE TO SIX WHO STILL REQUIRE SUCH INSTRUCTION CONTINUED TO RECEIVE IT. THESE LESSONS ARE CONDUCTED IN SEVEN SPECIAL READING CENTERS SET UP THROUGHOUT THE SCHOOL FOR THIS PURPOSE. POSTED IN THE PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE ARE INDIVIDUAL READING CHARTS WHICH FOLLOW THE READING PROGRAM OF EACH CHILD. TEACHERS ARE CONSIDERED ACCOUNTABLE FOR THEIR PUPILS' PROGRESS, AND TEACHER MORALE IS HIGH BECAUSE OF THIS ATMOSPHERE OF CONCERN IN THE SCHOOL. ABOUT 90 PERCENT OF THE TEACHING STAFF ARE "REGULARS" AND TEACHER ABSENTEEISM IS INFREQUENT. CITYWIDE TESTS ADMINISTERED IN THE SCHOOL IN MAY 1966 REVEALED THAT 60 PERCENT OF THE PUPILS IN EACH GRADE WERE READING AT GRADE LEVEL, AND THAT THE SCHOOL AVERAGE FOR FOURTH GRADERS TAKING THE IOWA TEST OF EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN MATHEMATICS WAS AT THE 99 PERCENTILE. THE FACT THAT THE BOARD OF EDUCATION HAS NOT PUBLICIZED THIS SUCCESS RAISES SOME QUESTIONS. THIS ARTICLE IS PUBLISHED IN THE "CONGRESS BI-WEEKLY," VOLUME 33, DECEMBER 19, 1966. (LB)

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chic ruling. It can then either be exercise of the legislative function by the creation of a new *issur* where none existed before (an unlikely prospect) or merely the expression of what in certain circles is referred to as a *daat Torah* (Torah attitude), a concept of very dubious Halachic standing. The strength of Halachah has always been its rigorously objective character. To present subjective opinion as Halachah can only, in the long run, weaken true Halachic authority.

Finally, a word about the role of the Agudah and its *Jewish Observer* in the matter. That they were instrumental in persuading the *Roshe Hayeshivoth* to participated in past coalition governments with distinctly non-Orthodox elements. Every argument used against Dr. Belkin's action—such as that by it he confers legitimacy on Conservatism and Reform—has been advanced against the Agudah in terms of its conferring Orthodox legitimacy on the Israel Government. The Agudah's position thus becomes ironic but also understandable. It must be a relief to pass on to another, criticism originally directed against oneself.

At the dinner, Dr. Belkin said: "My friends, I am not a separatist and I firmly believe that regardless of our differences, we should work together in unison where we think alike and feel alike for the good of Jewry as a whole."

This is a thought which I, for one, find eminently sound.

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The Inexplicable Silence of New York's Board of Education About a Most Unusual School

The Lessons of P.S. 192

Naomi Levine

A VISIT TO P.S. 192, IN NEW YORK'S HARLEM, SHOULD be made mandatory for every person who has come to believe the popular myths that Negro children are difficult to teach and pose insurmountable discipline problems; that they require, for their education, vast sums of money to be spent on special services and increased staff; that they are slow learners and are especially poor in reading; that segregated schools cannot motivate these children; that segregated schools cannot attract and hold good teachers; that teacher absenteeism is a natural by-product of the segregated school; and that these schools are helpless to counterbalance the deprivation that impairs the learning ability of minority children.

The story of P.S. 192 and its remarkable principal, Dr. Seymour Gang, demonstrates that these are indeed myths—artificial and untrue. It demonstrates that Negro and Puerto Rican children, inspired by a committed principal and dedicated teaching staff, can learn with the same speed and ability as white children; that integration, while important for the purposes of preparing white and Negro children to live in an integrated world, is not essential for providing motivation and quality education; that a ghetto-located school like P.S. 192 can attract and hold some of the most dedicated teachers; and that the reading skills of the children in such a school can be raised to a level equal to and superior to the level of children in many of the most exclusive private schools in this country.

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P.S. 192, a large, forbidding structure built in 1951, is located at 138th Street and Broadway. The school enrollment (of 1400 students) is 51 per cent Negro and the rest Puerto Rican and other Spanish-speaking children. These are not middle-class children, although, through Dr. Gang's efforts, a very small number of middle-class children from a nearby housing project did enroll last year. By and large the children in P.S. 192 come from poor families, many of which are on welfare.

Dr. Gang became the principal in 1962. At that time P.S. 192 was no different from other so-called "under-achieving schools" in the ghetto areas of New York. Dr. Gang arrived with no magic formula and no additional funds or personnel from the city or from any other public or private agency. He had to work with the material on hand. Almost at once he decided that the ability of the children to read must be made the school's priority. He was convinced that this, in turn, would help the children in all their other subjects, including mathematics. ("If a child can read and understand a mathematical problem or a civics question, he has a better chance of answering the problem correctly than the poor and slow reader who cannot comprehend," is Dr. Gang's obvious and logical thesis.) He believes, moreover, that the children need extra help in reading more than they do the cultural trips to museums, the opera, etc., which have characterized the "high horizons program." As Dr. Gang puts it: "Let them read well and the world of ideas and culture will come to them."

Thus, every P.S. 192 child in first and second

grade, *regardless of his ability to read*, is given 45 minutes, three to four times a week, in reading, in small units, with some children receiving individual help, if necessary—in addition to the regular reading instruction offered in the regular classes. This special help is given even to children who show average or above-average ability to read, the idea being that all children in these grades can benefit from such help. Beginning in third grade and throughout fourth, five and sixth grades, this special reading instruction is continued but is given only to children who show special need.

Seven special reading centers have been set up in the school in space that was formerly used for storage or closets. A little paint, appropriate pictures and simple furniture have converted this space into attractive areas conducive to studying and reading.

Charts indicating the reading level of every child in the school are posted in Dr. Gang's office and every teacher is held responsible for the progress of the children assigned him. The reading level of every child is followed in P.S. 192 with the same enthusiasm as the scores of the home team in other schools.

A Novel Atmosphere

Along with the intensive reading program, Dr. Gang has also created a new mood in the school. The children, he decided from the outset, were not to be considered "problem children" or "difficult children" or "deprived children"; they were only "children" requiring the best education that their teachers and principal could provide. The children were to have a sense of pride in themselves and in their school and in their achievements. They and their families were to be treated as human beings by every staff-member of the school. Dr. Gang himself set the example. His door remains always open. Every problem of every child and his parents is his concern. If the problem involves something outside of the school's immediate jurisdiction—for example, if a child needs clothing or eyeglasses or psychological care, or his mother requires hospitalization—Dr. Gang and his teachers will spend hours searching for a solution. He has established contacts with psychologists and psychological centers to give his children free help. He has made contact with various city departments to help in the solution of other family problems, including housing, health and welfare problems. The parents and the children feel free to come to him at any time for advice and help. He is everywhere—in the classrooms, in the auditorium, the gym, the playground, in the halls. The children know he cares about them. The teachers know he cares about them. As a result, the teachers care about the quality of education they project and the children care about learning.

The school is open every afternoon and three evenings a week for children who want to use its facilities for homework. Four special language classes have been set up in which children who do not speak English can be taught in Spanish until English becomes familiar to them. At that point they enter regular classes. During one of my visits I spoke to several children who were in this country for only one or two years; their fluency in English was startling.

There is also a wide range of extracurricular activities at P.S. 192, such as music banks, parent workshops, current-events clubs, etc. Dr. Gang and several of his teachers are usually on duty every afternoon and evening. Teachers at P.S. 192 do not "clock out" at three o'clock. A visit any day of the week will find teachers at the school late in the afternoon and evening, working, talking and playing with the children. A sense of love and concern permeates the school. "We have no discipline problems at 192 and you can quote me," Dr. Gang states with justifiable pride.

Dedication and Achievement

As a result of Dr. Gang's inspiration and direction, moreover, teacher morale has soared. His teachers have a sense of purpose, dedication and achievement. They are at 192 either because they requested appointment to the school or because Dr. Gang requested them. Applications come to Dr. Gang's office from all over the country. Absenteeism among the staff is negligible. Over 90 per cent of the teachers are "regulars"; less than 10 per cent are substitutes.

Most important, the progress of the children on all national tests has been remarkable. Dr. Gang is reluctant to talk mere statistics, knowing how tricky they can be. After some persuasion, however, I was permitted to examine his files. I discovered that last May, on citywide standardized tests, *60 per cent of each grade* in the school scored on grade level in reading (Metropolitan Achievement Tests). In mathematics, on the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills administered to the fourth grade, the school average was at the 99 percentile. This means that only *one per cent* of the school averages in the nation upon which national norms were established (160 school systems from 46 states) did better than the school average of P.S. 192. (These fourth-graders are the children who were in first grade when Dr. Gang became principal and had the advantage of his special reading program.) It is interesting to note that in addition five graduates of P.S. 192 were admitted, last year, to the Bronx High School of Science after completing J.H.S. 43, and others were admitted to Music and Art and Brooklyn Technical High Schools.

Dr. Gang is, in sum, a committed man, a dedicated teacher motivated by the unswerving belief that every child who comes under his care is entitled to the best "quality education" available. He does not, however, believe that "quality education" is to be considered a substitute for "*integrated* quality education." He is a

staunch supporter of efforts to achieve better racial and economic balance in the classroom. He appreciates fully the advantages to both white and Negro children of interaction with one another in preparation for the integrated world of tomorrow. He is alert to the fact that his success at P.S. 192 can be used to further the growing mood in the Negro community today—a mood born of frustration and despair—to shelve integration efforts and concentrate exclusively on quality education in the ghetto schools. He believes that efforts to achieve racial balance must go forward *simultaneously* with efforts to upgrade every school in New York, including every ghetto-located school. Such efforts to upgrade the quality of education in the ghetto-located schools need not and should not be postponed while integration efforts go forward. The two are not in opposition to each other. On the contrary, the pursuit of quality education is an *indispensable* and *integral* part of all intelligently conceived integration efforts.

Unanswered Questions

The lesson to be learned from P.S. 192 is not that "separate but quality schools" are a substitute for integration, *but, rather, that the level of education in a public school need not, and indeed will not, be lowered if Negro and Puerto Rican children comprise a majority segment of the school population, if intelligent efforts are used to promote quality education.*

At a time in New York City's history when the white community has become increasingly fearful about the impact of integration on the level of education, one cannot help but wonder why the Board of Education has not publicized the record of achievement of P.S. 192. Why hasn't the Board used P.S. 192 as an example of what a committed principal can do with minimal staff and minimal funds in a segregated school? There is no doubt that one reason for the lack of publicity surrounding P.S. 192 is Dr. Gang himself, who shuns the spotlight. He is fearful that the greater his "celebrity" the more time he and his staff will have to spend in giving interviews, in being polite to scores of casual visitors. This, he feels, would steal precious time from his main job and that of the teachers—teaching.

One suspects, however, that there may be other, more subtle reasons for the Board of Education's silence concerning Dr. Gang's achievements. It may be that Dr. Gang's success at P.S. 192 would raise serious questions about the abilities of other principals. It may be that it would raise some question with regard to the Board of Education's supervisory techniques. It may be that it might raise a question as to why the Board does not hold every principal accountable for the achievement of pupils in his school as Dr. Gang holds every teacher in P.S. 192 responsible for the achievement level of every pupil in his class. And, it may be that Dr. Gang's achievements in the face of the tragic retardation in the other ghetto schools would be embarrassing for the Board of Education.

We do not know the answers, but there is good reason for believing that the Board of Education owes the New York community an explanation.

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